

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ADDIS 04264 130636Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4828
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SANA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 4264

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SO US ET MASS PDEV MOPS
SUBJ: SOMALIA REQUESTS U.S. ARMS

REF: STATE 161221

1. ASSUMING THEY WOULD LEARN OF IT (AND THEY WOULD),
ETHIOPIAN REACTION TO MOVE ON OUR PART TO SUPPLY SOMALIS
DIRECTLY WITH ANY MILITARY HARDWARE AT ALL IS PERFECTLY
PREDICTABLE. EPMG ALREADY PERCEIVES WORLDWIDE IMPERIALISM,
"ESPECIALLY US IMPERIALISM", AS DIRECTLY THREATENING
ETHIOPIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SOCIALIST REVOLU-
TION, USING "REACTIONARY ARAB STOOGES". THUS FAR, ACCU-
SATIONS RE THREAT TO TERRITORY HAVE BEEN IN CONTEXT OF
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 04264 130636Z

ERITREA AND RED SEA (ARAB LAKE), MAINLY, WE BELIEVE, BE-
CAUSE WE HAVE GIVEN THEM NO REASON TO LINK US WITH
SOMALIA. (EVEN SO, MEDIA ARE BEGINNING TO EDGE IN THAT
DIRECTION NOW THAT SOMALIA, OR AT LEAST SIAD BARRE, HAS
BECOME BONA FIDE REACTIONARY AS RESULT OF ETHIOPIAN PER-
CEPTION OF HIS INTENTIONS IN OGADEN.)

2. HOWEVER, SHOULD WE NOW CHOOSE PATH OF DIRECT MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR SOMALIA (AND ANY ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN SUCH ASSISTANCE AS BEING FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES WILL CUT ABSOLUTELY NO ICE HERE), WE CAN EXPECT AN IMMEDIATE AND SHARPLY ADVERSE REACTION ALONG LINES OF PARA ONE ABOVE. ETHIOPIANS SEE OGADEN STRICTLY IN TERMS OF NATIONAL INTEREST. GIVEN HISTORY OF SOMALI IRREDENTISM AND CURRENT STEP-UP OF INSURGENT ACTIVITIES THERE, WHICH ETHIOPIANS ARE CONVINCED ARE ORCHESTRATED AND ACTIVELY SUPPORTED BY MOGADISCIO, ANYTHING AT ALL THAT EVEN GIVES APPEARANCE OF SUPPORTING SOMALI DESIGNS WILL BE JUMPED ON BY EPMG AS SUPPORT FOR ONE OF THEIR PRINCIPAL ENEMIES. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, WE CAN ANTICIPATE THAT WHAT REMAINS OF OUR FRAGILE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP HERE WILL DETERIORATE FURTHER, PERHAPS EVEN CEASE ALTOGETHER, SHOULD SHOOTING WAR BREAK OUT OR OGADEN SITUATION BECOME DESPERATE FOR ETHIOPIA. REACTION INDEED LIKELY TO BE WORSE THAN CURRENT VERBAL ATTACKS ON US FOR OUR ALLEGED SUPPORT OF ARABS. ONLY CONCRETE EVIDENCE EPMG CAN FIND VIS-A-VIS ARABS TO DATE IS C-130'S FOR SUDAN WHICH NOT THAT MUCH OF DIRECT THREAT. AID TO SOMALIA, HOWEVER, WOULD BE AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT CATEGORY. NOR WOULD WE MAKE ANY FRIENDS AMONG MORE MODERATE ELEMENTS OF ETHIOPIAN POPULATION WHO OTHERWISE STILL PROVIDE RESERVOIR OF GOODWILL TOWARDS US. EXTERNAL THREATS TO ETHIOPIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY ARE PERHAPS ONE ISSUE ABOVE ALL THAT CAN UNITE ETHIOPIANS,

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PAGE 03 ADDIS 04264 130636Z

WHATEVER THEIR POLITICAL PERSUASION OR WALK OF LIFE.

3. RE PARA 7 REFTTEL, ASSIGNMENT OF DEFENSE ATTACHE TO MOGADISCIO, WERE IT TO OCCUR SO SOON AFTER DEPARTURE OF ATTACHE FROM ADDIS, WILL AROUSE ETHIOPIANS SUSPICIONS RE OUR INTENTIONS, WHICH THUS FAR CONFINED TO PRESS SPECULATION. SUSPICION WILL NOT ENTIRELY DISSIPATE EVEN IF WE DO NOT PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE, FOR THERE WILL BE THOSE HERE WHO WILL SEE ATTACHE IN ADVISORY CAPACITY TO GSDR. US NAVAL VISITS LESS LIKELY BE VIEWED WITH CONCERN, IF THEY WIDELY SPACED AND DO NOT OCCUR DURING PERIODS OF ETHIOPIAN/SOMALI CRISIS. SAME PROBABLY TRUE OF AIRCRAFT VISITS, UNLESS ETHIOPIANS, WHO LONG ACCUSTOMED TO MAC FLIGHTS IN CONNECTION WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR ETHIOPIA, CONCLUDE THAT DELIVERY OF HARDWARE IS PURPOSE OF THEIR VISIT. WE DOUBT AID PROGRAM FOR SOMALIA WILL BOTHER ETHIOPIANS MUCH.

4. IN GENERAL, WHILE WE CAN APPRECIATE DEPT'S WISH NOT TO UPSET MOMENTUM OF SOMALI MOVES AWAY FROM USSR, WE SUGGEST THAT ARMS SUPPLY IS NAME OF GAME IN HORN. NOW THAT WE HAVE PAINFULLY EXTRICATED OURSELVES FROM MILITARY

RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA, AND GIVEN LONG-STANDING
ETHIOPIAN/SOMALI HOSTILITY, WE WOULD HOPE,
AS SEEN FROM HERE, THAT WE WILL MOVE VERY SLOWLY IN
ENTERING INTO A SIMILAR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER SIDE,
PARTICULARLY DURING PRESENT HIGHLY VOLATILE STAGE OF
TERRITORIAL DISPUTE.
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